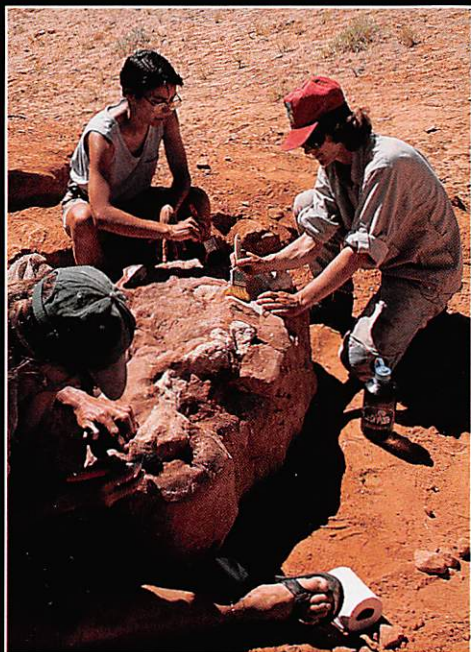


NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

On Television



LOUIE PSIHUYOS, MATRIX (ABOVE); GLEN MARULLO

■ EXPLORER, OCT. 13, 7 P.M. ET

Fitting Pieces of a Fossil Puzzle

DINOSAUR DIGGERS delicately uncover the 80-million-year-old remains of an oviraptor at what may be the world's best fossil site, Ukhaa Tolgod in Mongolia's Gobi desert (left). Months later at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City the perfectly articulated skeleton of the six-foot-long immature oviraptor (below) awaits release from its "field jacket"—or plaster wrap.

EXPLORER's "Dinosaur Hunters" accompanies paleontologists Michael Novacek and Mark Norell on their sixth journey into the heart of the Gobi. Displaying footage from a 1920s expedition by scientist-adventurer Roy Chapman Andrews and using animation and time-lapse techniques, the film transports viewers to a world lost in time yet immortalized in bone.

■ PROGRAM GUIDE

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The first thing you'll notice when you arrive in Vernal, the home base for most visitors to Dinosaurland, is the 30-foot-tall pink brontosaurus. Her name is Dinah. She has a welcoming smile and long eyelashes and can be seen from miles away. Farther down Main Street you'll encounter three dinosaurs engaged in battle and a painting of a cuddly brontosaurus in a two-piece bathing suit. Then there's Campground Dina and the Dinosaur Inn. And the gift shops hawking dinosaur-themed toys. Oh, and be sure to stop by the visitor center, too, to pick up your license to hunt pterodactyls.

This oversize, Flintstones-style kitsch can certainly be a shock to the senses. But if you visit Dinosaurland, you'll have to get used to it. Not so much the kitsch, which is largely centered in Vernal, but having your senses shocked. Like the gargantuan reptiles that once reigned over this northeastern corner of Utah, Dinosaurland is simply larger than life—a region of towering rock formations, time-chiseled cliffs, tumultuous rivers, and prehistoric giants. Some of the world's finest fossilized specimens have been pulled from this desert. Hundreds still remain, offering dinosaur lovers old and young the chance to come face-to-face with these awe-inspiring monsters of the past.

Before you set out into this Lost World, get a thorough introduction at Vernal's Utah Field House of Natural History. The prehistory wing covers the area's Anasazi, Fremont, and Ute tribes; the geology exhibit features rocks that glow like kryptonite

Dinosaurland

YABBA DABBA DOO IN UTAH



SCOTT L. SMITH/CORBIS IMAGES

under ultraviolet bulbs. The highlight, however, is the dinosaurs. Look up as soon as you enter the museum: That's the long-necked skeleton of *Diplodocus carnegiei* looming above your head. Outside you'll find 18 life-size dinosaur models, some of which, particularly the sharp-toothed *Tyrannosaurus rex* and the many-clawed *Utahraptor*, seem quite real. Frightened visitors can try hiding in the "little paleontologists" pit, a sandbox where kids can excavate bones.

Twenty miles east of Vernal lies a vastly more impressive excavation: the Dinosaur Quarry in Dinosaur National Monument. Since digging began in 1909, more than 340 tons of dinosaur bones have

been exhumed from this ancient riverbed—a paleontological bounty that visitors can experience firsthand inside the quarry's airy, two-level structure. Here, within a 150-foot-long slab of rock, scientists have carefully exposed more than 1,600 Jurassic period dinosaur bones, providing a graphic picture of how these behemoths were entombed for eternity. Check the diagram to find your favorites: The spiny-backed *Stegosaurus* and the fern-munching *Dryosaurus* are in here. For a sense of scale, look at how the femur of a 34-ton brontosaurus dwarfs the excited 8-year-olds in Jurassic Park T-shirts.

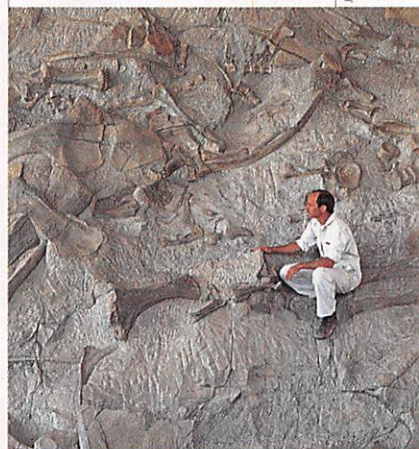
While the skeletons are the monument's main draw, the

park's rugged desert terrain is equally impressive. Scenic drives weave past weathered mesas and precarious outcroppings, while a handful of trails offer an opportunity to spot local wildlife. For a short trek, hit the Desert Voices Trail, a moderate 2-mile trek that begins near the overhanging rock face at Split Mountain Campground and winds gradually uphill through patches of grass and burnt-red rock.

Both the Green and Yampa rivers snake through the monument as well, offering rafters the opportunity to experience the park's wildest sections. Several operators lead white-water and float trips; if you opt for a white-water excursion, be prepared for a wild ride: These are the waters that swallowed a couple of John Wesley Powell's boats during his scientific explorations in the 1860s and '70s.

If you're looking for a combination of hiking and water activities, two state parks are just a short drive from Vernal. Steinaker State Park's 2-mile-wide reservoir attracts waterskiers, swimmers, and even scuba divers; hikers can wander the lonely slot canyons or make the quick jaunt to Moonshine Arch. Nearby Red

JEFF GRASS



Jurassic period skeletons dwarf a paleontologist at Dinosaur Quarry.



Fremont warriors guard the canyons near McKee Spring.

Fleet State Park is known for fishing and sandstone scenery. The highlight, however, is a 2.4-mile round-trip hike to the Triassic Period Dinosaur Trackway, where delicate, three-toed dinosaur footprints have been frozen in the landscape for some 200 million years.

Humans have also left their mark on the landscape. Deep within the monument, near McKee Spring, lies a series of intricate petroglyphs presumably created between 800 and 2,000 years ago by the Fremont Indians. Even more stunning examples can be found in the orange-brown sandstone cliffs above McConkie Ranch, 10 miles northwest of Vernal. After a 20-minute hike in, you'll reach the Dry Fork Petroglyphs—a collection of rock art world famous for its quantity, quality, and size. Many of the painted figures are decorated with elaborate head wear. Some are more than 8 feet tall.

Visitors willing to wander further afield can enjoy one of the area's most scenic drives—the “Drive Through the Ages”—en route to Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area. North of Vernal, Highway 191 rises through 19 different geological periods marked by signs reading “Mowry Formation” or “Home of Fossilized Squid.” Most of the time the land announces the changes itself: Faded

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

All phone numbers are 435 area code unless noted. For Dinosaurland information, stop by Vernal's **Northeastern Utah Visitors Center**, 235 E. Main St., 789-7894, www.dinoland.com.

WHERE TO STAY

In addition to Campground Dina, campers can stay at **Dinosaur National Monument** (789-2115), **Steinaker State Park** (800-322-3770), and **Red Fleet State Park** (800-322-3770).

Best Western Dinosaur Inn, 251 E. Main St., (800) 528-1234. Rooms from \$70.

Econo Lodge, 311 E. Main St., (800) 424-4777. Rooms from \$45.

Landmark Inn Bed and Breakfast, 288 East 100 South, 781-1800. Rooms from \$65.

Campground Dina RV Park, 930 N. Vernal St., (800) 245-2148. With miniature golf. Spaces from \$12 a night.

WHERE TO EAT

Crack'd Pot, 1089 E. Hwy. 40, 781-0133. Steak, seafood, and traditional American fare, popular with the outdoors crowd.

La Cabaña, 56 W. Main St., 789-3151. Twenty-two Mexican combo plates to choose from, plus kids' meals for under \$3.

Seven-Eleven Ranch, 77 E. Main St., 789-1170. Chuck wagon dinners here are legendary.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Utah Field House of Natural History, 235 E. Main St., 789-3799.

DUP Museum, 500 West 200 South, 789-0352.

Western Pioneer Museum, 300 East 200 South, 789-7396.

Dinosaur National Monument, off Hwy. 40, 789-2115.

Steinaker State Park, off Hwy. 44/191, 789-4432.

Red Fleet State Park, off Hwy. 44/191, 789-4432.

Adrift Adventures, river outfitters, (800) 824-0150.

Dan Hatch River Expeditions, river outfitters, (800) 342-8243.

EVENTS

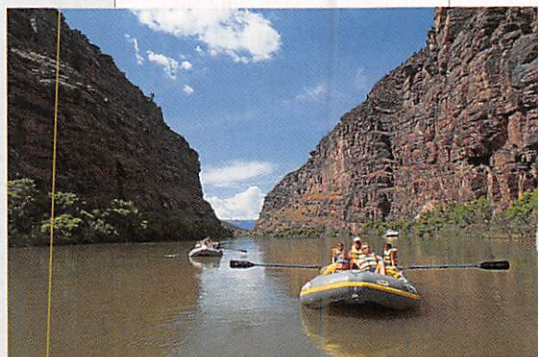
Miniature Horse Show, May 26–27, Vernal, 789-7396.

Dinosaur Roundup Rodeo, July 12–15, Vernal, 789-7396.

Outlaw Trail Theater, late June–early July, Vernal, 789-7396.

brown rock turns to deep red or whitewashed gray; low shrubs become a thick green forest that, near the 8,428-foot summit, diminishes into spindly trees. At drive's end you'll reach the national recreation area and the 502-foot-high Flaming Gorge Dam. If you have time, take a guided tour of the imposing structure, or try water-skiing, fishing, swimming, or sailing on the swollen, 66-square-mile Flaming Gorge Reservoir that backs up behind it.

If time is limited, head back to Vernal and explore the town's Wild West past.

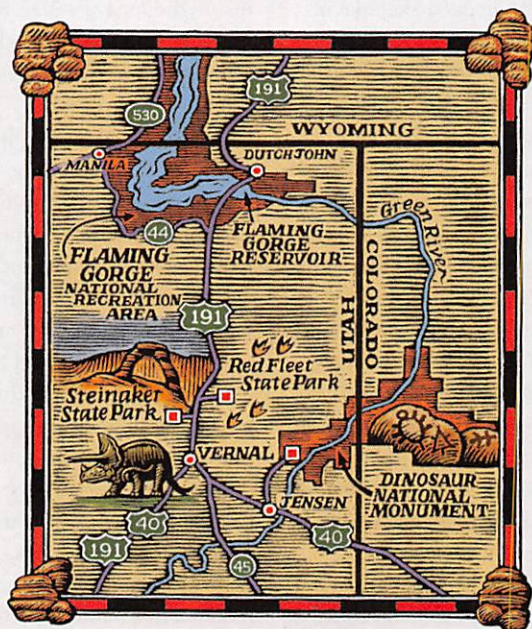


A one-way ride on the Green River takes rafters to the untamed heart of Dinosaurland.

The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Museum showcases artifacts from pioneer life; the Western Pioneer Museum features a gun that was used by *Gunsmoke's* Matt Dillon, a.k.a. James Arness.

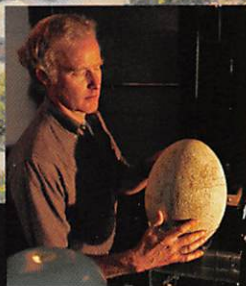
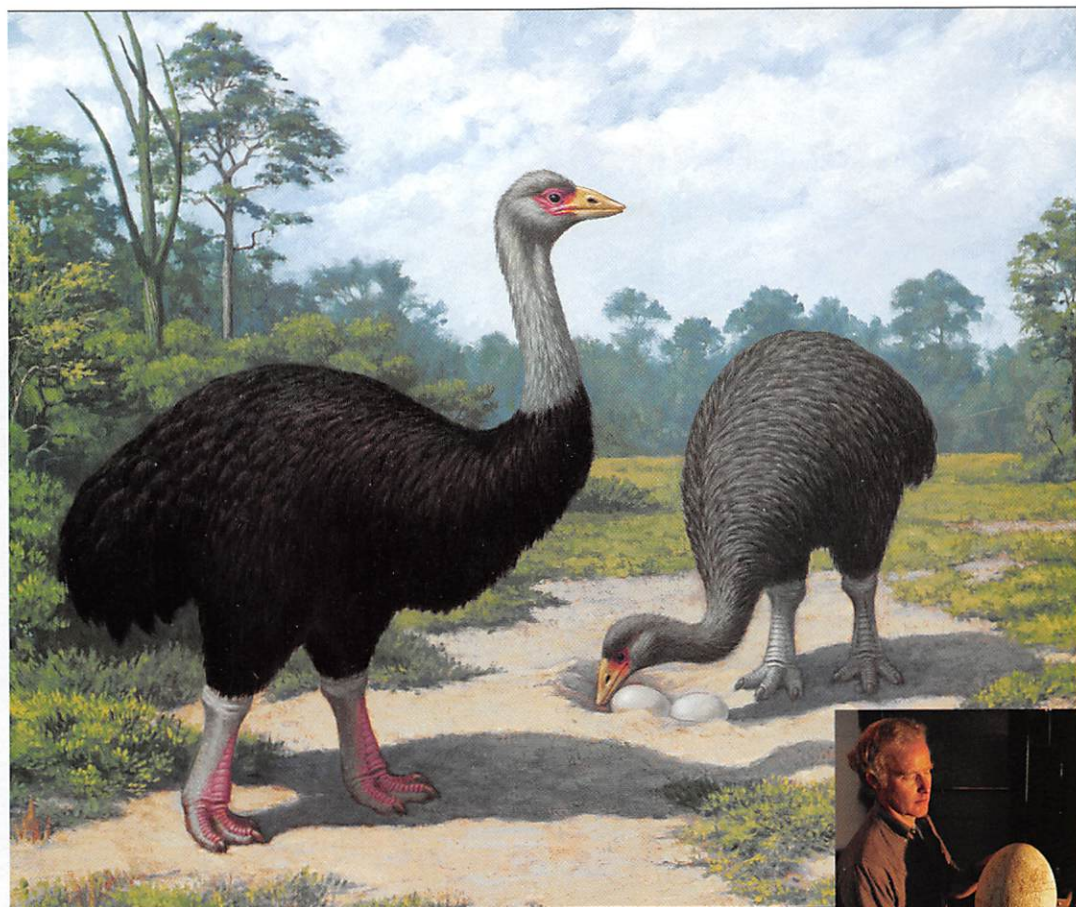
When you've had your fill of local color, climb into bed at the Landmark Inn Bed and Breakfast, which occupies a renovated church, or any of the chain hotels that dominate Main Street. Of course, you can always spend a quiet night at Split Mountain or any of the many other secluded area campgrounds. But be sure to bring your dinosaur hunting license. You might think you've seen it all, but you never know what else could be lurking out there.

—Michael Yessis



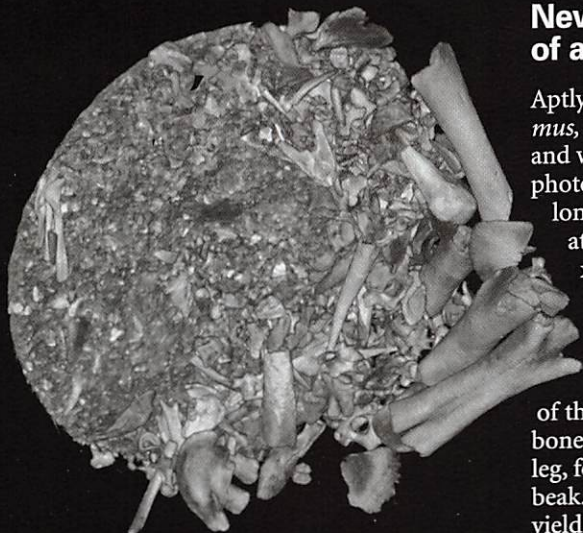
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Geographica



New "Pictures" of a Giant Bird

Aptly named, Madagascar's *Aepyornis maximus*, or largest tall bird, stood nearly ten feet and weighed half a ton. GEOGRAPHIC writer-photographer Luis Marden acquired two foot-long fossilized eggs of the bird, extinct since at least the 16th century, for a 1967 article; x-rays at the time showed an embryo inside one. Now CT scans by Timothy Rowe (above) of the University of Texas reveal that the second egg also held an embryo (left). "We think it died a third of the way through development, and the bones sank into a pile," Rowe says. "We can see leg, foot, and pelvis bones, and a little of the beak." Comparison with other large birds may yield insight into how *A. maximus* developed.



ART BY WALTER A. WEBER (TOP); JOSEPH JAWORSKI, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN (INSET); COMPUTER RECONSTRUCTION OF CT SCAN BY RICHARD KETCHAM AND MATTHEW COLBERT, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

GOOD HANDS.SM

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SETTLE HER CLAIM. AFTERWARD, CAROL SAID**



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